

Attractive environments for migrants include mountains, seashores, and warm climates. Proximity to the Rocky Mountains lures Americans to the state of Colorado, and the Alps pull French people to eastern France. Some migrants are shocked to find polluted air and congestion in these areas. The southern coast of England, the Mediterranean coast of France, and the coasts of Florida attract migrants, especially retirees, who enjoy swimming and lying on the beach. Of all elderly people who migrate from one U.S. state to another, one third select Florida as their destination. Regions with warm winters, such as southern Spain and the southwestern United States, attract migrants from harsher climates.

Those with bronchitis, asthma, tuberculosis, and allergies have been pulled to Arizona by the dry desert climate. Ironically, the large number of migrants has modified Arizona's environmental conditions. The pollen count in Tucson increased 3,500 percent since the 1940s, and the percentage of people with allergies there is now twice the national average.

Local experts attribute two-thirds of the pollen count in Tucson to three types of vegetation imported by migrants: the mulberry tree, the olive tree, and Bermuda grass. Some communities have banned these three species. The mulberry tree dies after 30 years, but the olive tree—an attractive species in Arizona because it is drought resistant—can live for 500 years. Bermuda grass sinks deep roots and is difficult to eradicate. Arizona's recent experience shows that migration may no longer be the answer for people with allergies.

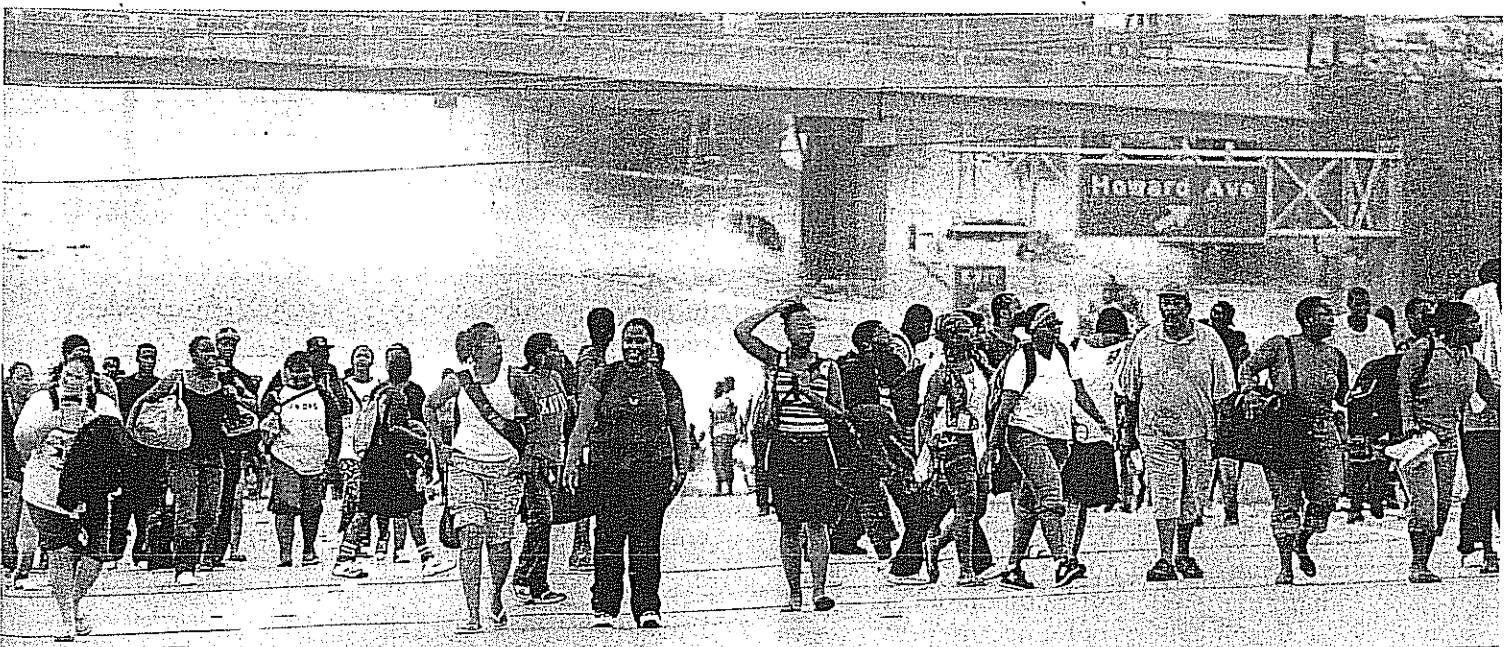
Migrants are also pushed from their homes by adverse physical conditions. Water—either too much or too little—poses the most common environmental threat. Many people are forced to move by water-related disasters because they live in a

vulnerable area, such as a floodplain. The floodplain of a river is the area subject to flooding during a specific number of years, based on historical trends. People living in the “100-year floodplain,” for example, can expect flooding on average once every century. Many people are unaware that they live in a floodplain, and even people who do know often choose to live there anyway.

The widespread flooding in New Orleans and other Gulf Coast communities in 2005 following Hurricane Katrina caused around 1,400 deaths and forced several hundred thousand people from their homes. Americans watching on television were shocked by the plight of residents stranded by the flooding; the squalid conditions in the evacuation centers, like the New Orleans Superdome and Convention Center; the lawlessness in the streets of New Orleans; and above all, the unsatisfactory response of emergency management officials.

A lack of water pushes others from their land. Hundreds of thousands have been forced to move from the Sahel region of northern Africa because of drought conditions. The people of the Sahel have traditionally been pastoral nomads, a form of agriculture adapted to dry lands but effective only at low population densities (see Chapter 10). The capacity of the Sahel to sustain human life—never very high—has declined recently because of population growth and several years of unusually low rainfall. Consequently, many of these nomads have been forced to move into cities and rural camps, where they survive on food donated by the government and international relief organizations.

In the United States, people were pushed from their land by severe drought as recently as the 1930s. Portions of Oklahoma and surrounding states became known as the Dust Bowl,



Environmental push factor. Hurricane Katrina forced hundreds of thousands of people to migrate from the Gulf Coast area. The largest numbers were forced from their homes in New Orleans.



*The Grapes of Wrath*, a novel by John Steinbeck written in 1939, depicted the plight of "Okies" forced to migrate from Oklahoma to California during the 1930s Dust Bowl. In 1940, the book was made into a movie directed by John Ford and starring Henry Fonda.

following several years of limited rainfall. Strong, dry winds blew across the plains and buried farms under several feet of dust. Thousands of families abandoned their farms and migrated to California, where they were called "Okies." The plight of the Okies was graphically portrayed by John Steinbeck in his novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939).

### Intervening Obstacles

Where migrants go is not always their desired destination. The reason why is that they may be blocked by an intervening obstacle, which is an environmental or cultural feature that hinders migration.

In the past, intervening obstacles were primarily environmental. Before the invention of modern transportation, such as railroads and motor vehicles, people migrated across land-masses by horse or on foot. Such migration was frequently difficult because of hostile features in the physical environment, such as mountains and deserts. For example, many migrants lured to California during the nineteenth century by the economic pull factor of the Gold Rush failed to reach their destination because they could not cross such intervening obstacles as the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, or desert country.

Bodies of water have long been important intervening obstacles. The Atlantic Ocean proved a particularly significant intervening obstacle for most European immigrants to North America. Tens of millions of Europeans spent their life savings for the right to cross the rough and dangerous Atlantic in the hold of a ship shared with hundreds of other immigrants.

Many Eastern Europeans who booked passage a century ago on ships to North America never made it. An unscrupulous shipowner would sail the boat through the Baltic Sea and North Sea and land at Liverpool or some other British port. Told that they had reached America, the passengers—none of whom could speak English—paid for a transatlantic journey of 7,000 kilometers (4,400 miles) but received a voyage of 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) to an undesired destination.

Transportation improvements that have promoted globalization, such as motor vehicles and airplanes, have diminished the importance of environmental features as intervening obstacles. However, today's migrant faces intervening obstacles created by local diversity in government and politics. A migrant needs a passport to legally emigrate from a country and a visa to legally immigrate to a new country.

### Distance of Migration

Ravenstein's theories made two main points about the distance that migrants travel to their new homes:

- Most migrants relocate a short distance and remain within the same country.
- Long-distance migrants to other countries head for major centers of economic activity.

### Internal Migration

International migration is permanent movement from one country to another, whereas internal migration is permanent movement within the same country. Consistent with the distance-decay principle presented in Chapter 1, the farther away a place is located, the less likely that people will migrate to it. Thus, international migrants are much less numerous than internal migrants.

Most people find migration within a country less traumatic than international migration because they find familiar language, foods, broadcasts, literature, music, and other social customs after they move. Moves within a country also generally involve much shorter distances than those in international migration. However, internal migration can involve long-distance moves in large countries, such as in the United States and Russia.

Internal migration can be divided into two types: Interregional migration is movement from one region of a country to another, whereas intra-regional migration is movement within one region. Historically, the main type of inter-regional migration has been from rural to urban areas in search of jobs. In recent years, some developed countries have seen migration from urban to environmentally attractive rural areas. The main type of intra-regional migration has been within urban areas, from older cities to newer suburbs.

### International Migration

International migration is further divided into two types: forced and voluntary. Voluntary migration implies that the migrant has chosen to move for economic improvement,

whereas forced migration means that the migrant has been compelled to move by cultural factors. Economic push and pull factors usually induce voluntary migration, whereas cultural factors normally compel forced migration. In one sense, migrants may also feel compelled by pressure inside themselves to migrate for economic reasons, such as to search for food or jobs, but they have not been explicitly compelled to migrate by the violent actions of other people.

Geographer Wilbur Zelinsky identified a migration transition, which consists of changes in a society comparable to those in the demographic transition. The migration transition is a change in the migration pattern in a society that results from the social and economic changes that also produce the demographic transition.

According to the migration transition, international migration is primarily a phenomenon of countries in stage 2 of the demographic transition, whereas internal migration is more important in stages 3 and 4. A society in stage 1 of the demographic transition—characterized by high birth and death rates and a low natural increase rate—is unlikely to migrate permanently to a new location, although it does have high daily or seasonal mobility in search of food.

In stage 2 of the demographic transition—when the natural increase rate goes up rapidly as a result of a sharp decline in the crude death rate—international migration becomes important, as does interregional migration from one country's rural areas to its cities. Like the sudden decline in the crude death rate, migration patterns in stage 2 societies are a consequence of technological change. Improvement in agricultural practices reduces the number of people needed in rural areas, whereas jobs in factories attract migrants to the cities in another region of the same country or in another country.

Crude birth rates begin to decline in stages 3 and 4 of the demographic transition as a result of social changes—people deciding to have fewer children. According to migration transition theory, societies in stages 3 and 4 are the destinations of the international migrants leaving the stage 2 countries in search of economic opportunities. The principal form of internal migration within countries in stages 3 and 4 of the demographic transition is intraregional, from cities to surrounding suburbs.

## Characteristics of Migrants

Ravenstein noted distinctive gender and family-status patterns in his migration theories:

- Most long-distance migrants are male.
- Most long-distance migrants are adult individuals rather than families with children.

## Gender of Migrants

A century ago, Ravenstein theorized that males were more likely than females to migrate long distances to other countries, because searching for work was the main reason for international migration, and males were much more likely than females to be employed. This held true for U.S. immigrants: during

the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, about 55 percent were male. But the gender pattern reversed in the 1990s, and women now constitute about 55 percent of U.S. immigrants.

Mexicans who come to the United States without proper immigration documents—currently the largest group of U.S. immigrants—show similar gender changes. As recently as the late 1980s, males constituted 85 percent of the Mexican migrants arriving in the United States without proper documents, according to U.S. census and immigration service estimates. But since the 1990s, women have accounted for about half of the undocumented immigrants from Mexico.

The increased female migration to the United States partly reflects the changing role of women in Mexican society: in the past, rural Mexican women were obliged to marry at a young age and to remain in the village to care for children. Now some Mexican women are migrating to the United States to join husbands or brothers already in the United States, but most are seeking jobs. At the same time, women also feel increased pressure to get a job in the United States because of poor economic conditions in Mexico.

## Family Status of Migrants

Ravenstein also believed that most long-distance migrants were young adults seeking work, rather than children or elderly people. For the most part, this pattern continues for the United States. About 40 percent of immigrants are between the ages of 25 and 39, compared to about 23 percent of the entire U.S. population. Immigrants are less likely to be elderly people: only 5 percent of immigrants are over age 65, compared to 12 percent of the entire U.S. population.

An increasing percentage of U.S. immigrants are children—16 percent of immigrants are under age 15, compared to 21 percent for the total U.S. population. With the increase in women migrating to the United States, more children are coming with their mothers.

Recent immigrants to the United States have attended school for fewer years and are less likely to have high school diplomas than are U.S. citizens. The typical undocumented Mexican immigrant has attended school for 4 years, less than the average American but a year more than the average Mexican.

For the most part, the origin of Mexican immigrants to the United States matches the expectations of the migration transition and distance-decay theories. With Mexico in stage 2 of the demographic transition, more than three-fourths of migrants are from rural areas. The destinations of choice within the United States are overwhelmingly states that border Mexico, with California receiving more than half, Texas another fifth, and other southwestern states most of the remainder.

But most immigrants originate not from Mexico's northern states but from interior states far from the U.S. border, as the distance-decay theory would suggest. The four leading sources of Mexican migrants are the states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, Chihuahua, and Zacatecas, and only Chihuahua is on the U.S. border. Residents of Mexico's border states are less likely to migrate to the United States, because jobs are relatively plentiful.

there (as discussed in Chapter 11) as a result of increased economic integration with the United States.

Most illegal Mexican immigrants have jobs in their home villages but migrate to the United States to earn more money. The largest number work in agriculture, picking fruits and vegetables, although some work in clothing factories. Even those who work long hours for a few dollars a day as farm laborers or factory workers prefer to earn relatively low wages by American standards than to live in poverty at home.

Most undocumented residents have no difficulty finding jobs in the United States. Some employers like to hire immigrants who do not have visas that permit them to work in the United States, because they can pay lower wages and do not have to provide health care, retirement plans, and other benefits. Unsatisfactory or troublesome workers can be fired and threatened with deportation.

Because farm work is seasonal, the flow of immigrants varies throughout the year. The greatest number of Mexicans head north to the United States in the autumn and return home in the spring. The money brought back by seasonal migrants is the primary source of income for many Mexican villages (and, of course, that money is removed from the U.S. economy). Shops give credit to the villagers through the winter until the men return in the spring with dollars. During the winter, these villages may be inhabited almost entirely by women and children.

## KEY ISSUE 2

### Where Are Migrants Distributed?

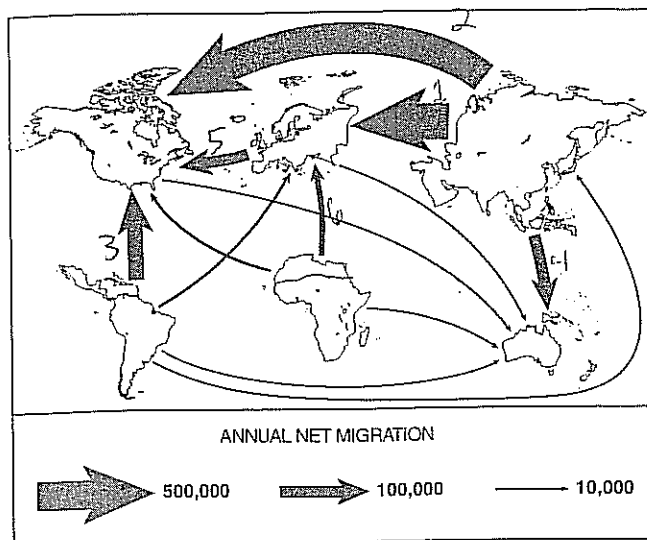
- Global migration patterns
- U.S. immigration patterns
- Impact of immigration on the United States

About 3 percent of the world's people are international migrants—that is, they currently live in countries other than the ones in which they were born. The country with by far the largest number of international migrants is the United States.

### Global Migration Patterns

At a global scale, Asia, Latin America, and Africa have net out-migration, whereas North America, Europe, and Oceania have net in-migration. The three largest flows of migrants are to Europe from Asia and to North America from Asia and from Latin America (Figure 3-2). Substantial in-migration also occurs from Europe to North America and from Asia to Oceania. Lower levels of net migration occur from Latin America to Oceania and from Africa to Europe, North America, and Oceania.

The global pattern reflects the importance of migration from less developed countries to more developed countries. Migrants from countries with relatively low incomes and high natural increase rates head for relatively wealthy countries, where job prospects are brighter.



**FIGURE 3-2** Global migration patterns. The major flows of international migrants are from less developed countries to more developed countries, especially from Asia and Latin America to North America and from Asia to Europe.

The population of the United States includes about 35 million individuals born in other countries. More than one-half of these immigrants were born in Latin America and one-fourth in Asia. More than one-half of the Latin American immigrants came from Mexico. Other countries with a large number of immigrants include Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom (Figure 3-3).

Immigrants comprise 12 percent of the population in the United States. Although it contains the largest number of immigrants, the United States has a smaller percentage of immigrants than several less populous countries. One-fourth of the Australian population and one-sixth of the Canadian population are immigrants. The overall percentage of immigrants in Europe is around 5 percent, lower than in the United States, though it is much higher in smaller European countries, such as Luxembourg and Switzerland.

The highest percentage of immigrants can be found in the Middle East, at about one-half of the region's total population. The population of the United Arab Emirates is made up of approximately 74 percent immigrants, and Kuwait 68 percent. These countries and other petroleum-exporting countries of the Middle East attract immigrants primarily from poorer Middle Eastern countries and from Asia to perform many of the dirty and dangerous functions in the oil fields.

### U.S. Immigration Patterns

The United States plays a special role in the study of international migration. The world's third most populous country is inhabited overwhelmingly by direct descendants of immigrants. About 70 million people have migrated to the United States since 1820, including the 30 million currently alive.

The United States has had three main eras of immigration. The first era was the initial settlement of colonies. The second